Washington State Department of Transportation
Public Transportation and Rail Division
Office of Transit Mobility

Advisory Committee Meeting
WSDOT Urban Planning Office

August 5, 2005
9:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Attendees
Charlie Howard (PSRC); Bob Hart (RTC); Kathleen Collins (Spokane Transit);
Jemae Hoffman (City of Seattle); Joyce Olson (Community Transit); Kevin
Desmond (KC Metro); Karen Parkhurst (TRPC); Lynne Griffith (C-Tran); Martha
Rose (Island Transit); Marty Minkhoff (Sound Transit); Paul Kaftanski (Everett
Transit); Steve Clancy (Whatcom Transit); Mary Place (City of Yakima); Kim van
Ekstrom (City of Redmond);
Janice Hamil, Theresa Smith, Judy Giniger, TJ Nedrow, Cathy Silins (WSDOT)

Housekeeping Issues
- A committee member suggested future meetings be held at 9:30 a.m. to
  accommodate travel time. The group agreed.
- The next Advisory Group meeting will be Friday, August 19th.
- If anyone has questions about reimbursement for travel, please talk to
  Theresa.
- Theresa asked if any local agencies could volunteer experienced staff time to
  help out during this initial push (and possibly beyond), and we could pay their
  salary for that one or two days a week.

Review Previous Minutes
Theresa presented the previous meeting's minutes. Two issues were noted:
- In the Group Two discussion under the Other Criteria section, the issue of
  sustainability through continuation of funding was discussed and should be
  noted in the minutes.
- In Group One discussion in the second paragraph under the first item, we
  need to emphasize that this refers to all modes of transportation, including
  highways, ferries, transit, pedestrian, et cetera.

Goal of Today's Meeting
Resolve issues and develop general concurrences with the criteria and questions
for the grant application.

Overview of Previous Work

Theresa reviewed the discussion of the Grant Technical Work Group. The criteria and questions as revised by the Grant Technical Work Group were then presented to the Advisory Committee members.

Consensus from the Grant Technical Work Group specified that:

The application will be in an essay format. The application will have a look similar to the application that Highways and Local Programs (H&LP) has created for the "Safe Routes to Schools" program paperwork. This will allow us to retain the same look across all agency grant applications. Secretary MacDonald wants a "One DOT" look to all grant applications. He believes that project descriptions need to be understood by a non-technical public. If a project would be better suited for a different grant program, the common look and style of the applications will be useful for sharing application information across grant programs within the department. A committee member asked whether there would be the potential for partial funding of a project from both grant programs. Kathleen Davis will be asked to attend an Advisory meeting in the future to discuss these opportunities for cross-over. We hope there will be a "crosswalk" to accomplish sharing of grant applications so entities don't have to submit multiple applications. It was asked if a project might be broken into parts and funded with different programs. This will be discussed with Kathleen. Not all grants are required to go through the Legislature, so the timelines are different for each of the grants.

A committee member suggested that the criteria for grant consideration should be reviewed first before determining what questions should be asked to determine whether a grant meets the criteria. Another member suggested that the committee remember to consider that the criteria should parallel the legislation creating the grant program.

Grant Criteria Review and Discussion

A committee member proposed that all grant applications should include public transit agencies and that this should be a minimum requirement/threshold of the application. The group discussed the relationship of projects in the grant proposals and projects of the local transit systems.

A committee member asked why there was no specific mention of transit and that there should be. It was pointed out that within the law it refers to public transportation, which is not specifically defined as transit.

A committee member asked how the coordination should be considered within the grant. Should coordination be scored higher? What if a jurisdiction asks for a grant without coordinating with others? Committee members discussed the importance of coordination, as it was a key element of the legislation. The

committee decided that there should be a threshold of coordination – coordinating with jurisdictions and transit agencies in affected area. The grant proposals should include a letter of support from the local jurisdictions.

The committee discussed how politics would play a role in eventual awards to entities. They also discussed the point that the intent of this legislation was to promote public transportation projects in congested corridors. It was again pointed out that the Legislature will be making the final decision on project selection.

A committee member suggested that in the printed materials, it be made clear that this grant program is intended for public transportation. *"Regional Mobility Grants: A grant program for public transportation that promotes coordination and efficiencies in congested corridors"*. A committee member clarified this statement with the need to define this as a grant program for public transportation projects that promote coordination for mobility in congested corridors.

Further committee discussion on the issues of coordination included:
- A threshold should be set that a grant must go through coordinated efforts. At a minimum, they should include a letter of agreement.
- It was felt that the committee needed to ensure there weren't multiple agencies/municipalities/jurisdictions competing for the same dollars for the same or similar projects.
- Projects must be coordinated with a transit agency – or if not appropriate to be coordinated, at least a fallback criteria. It was agreed that there must be a letter of support from a transit agency for each grant proposal.

The committee agreed that they needed to send strong projects to the legislature that demonstrates a wise use of public funds. These projects need to show coordination and integration of shared goals.

A committee member asked for clarification of whether the local transit system must be the sponsoring agency or must approve or sign onto the project. Would each application from a non-transit jurisdiction require a letter of support from transit? What about applications from transit – shouldn't they require a letter of support from a local jurisdiction if the project will require coordination, approval, or permitting from that jurisdiction?

A committee member pointed out that not all projects would require or receive the support of a transit agency. An example might be a TDM project or a private system. Another member pointed out that proposals put forth by non-transit agencies might not be supported by the transit agency regardless of the quality of the project because they would be competition for the projects put forth by the transit agency.

The committee discussed the need to create "threshold" criteria. For instance would a project be "required" to be supported by transit? Are there other minimum requirements that should be considered?

Theresa Smith reminded the Advisory Council that all applications submitted will be forwarded to the Legislature. It is their decision which project will be funded. The ranking/scoring process is to give them additional understanding of the projects. Since all projects will be forwarded, there can't be "threshold" criteria that eliminates an application from being included on the list but they could be removed from the ranking for not meeting the minimum requirements set by the committee.

A committee member asked what is the definition of "public transportation"? Is it just transit? Does it include shuttle services operated by a local business? Services provided by a TMA? Theresa said that for the most part, "public transportation" will be transit, although the law does specifically reference TDM, park and ride lots, and rush hour transit.

There will be an expectation that the applicant has concurrence with the local transit system. There will also be an expectation that the project is either in a local/regional plan or is consistent with a local/regional plan. MPOs/RTPOs may be submitting letters with this statement. If a project has not received support from the local transit system, it will be important for that application to explain why not.

A committee member asked whether the applications would be submitted by paper or electronically. Theresa suggested that the same process be used as H&LP, which is requiring applications be submitted electronically. This would include maps and charts. The reviewers will be able to access the .pdf files.

A suggestion was made to wait and see if we even have any of these projects that are uncoordinated and don't have buyoff from other affected entities.

The point was brought forth relating to #1 of the criteria that we need to define measures to demonstrate return on public dollars. Lay people need measurement defined clearly – they may need help finding figures. We need to keep comparisons within regions: apples to apples. As part of the legislation we are required to report quarterly and annually – will we have to teach Leg how to read the data?

The Advisory Group discussed the issues of geographic equity. There was concern that in trying to address geographic equity we not lose sight of the fact that all projects that are ranked high must be really solid/quality projects. It was suggested that in the written materials, there could be a statement to encourage jurisdictions to submit smaller projects, and projects from systems throughout the state. Or, at least they won't be discouraged from applying. The committee

decided that there should not be any set distribution of funding based on specific geographical area.

Specific Criteria
Efficiency
The numeric, quantitative analysis that is currently used to describe efficiency may be difficult for some projects to generate. A committee member suggested that it might be sufficient for a project proposal to explain how it will demonstrate the return on investment.

Is "system integration" an efficiency measure? How do you best describe or track the impact that the project will have on a corridor? A suggestion was made that it would be easier to use objective criteria to compare projects if there are numbers to compare. Comments were made regarding the difficulty of comparisons – it's like apples to oranges. How will projects in the Puget Sound be compared to projects in Clark County or Spokane? Will there be regional targets or goals? Regional expectations? A committee member suggested that the measurement be one that the transit system creates themselves. For example, if you are currently carrying 10 people an hour in a specific corridor and the project would allow you to carry 50 people an hour. You can also look at cost effectiveness measures.

Theresa suggested that the Bottlenecks and Chokepoints maps distributed at the first meeting could be used as a reference point.

Another member mentioned that the CTR Performance Grants are a good example of measurement and suggested they could be used as a model for identifying the impacts of the projects. Theresa suggested the reduction of delay could be a measurement. There was a reminder that congestion delay is not always vehicle delay but person delay.

Partnerships
A committee member reminded the group that project partners are not always financial contributors. The partners could be supporting the project in other important ways such as making zoning changes or providing expertise. The committee agreed that non-financial partners should still be considered.

Implementation Timeline
The committee expressed that we don't want to limit the applications to just small projects. Phases of projects can also be considered. We do want to have projects that will result in deliverables at the end of the period. Initially, planning, design phases may not be considered as high scoring as projects that will result in measurable efficiencies. Phase measurements may be important to report.

A member reminded the group that this first year of grants has only "initial criteria", as the program continues, the criteria can be refined. In this first year the program needs to show some "quick wins." Another member put forth that the projects should be "action oriented." The committee questioned whether phases would be appropriate. Consensus was that the time frame should be clearly defined and the grant program could fund end phases of projects. However, discussion of whether to use these funds on projects that are already fully funded resulted in a consensus of "no". Projects that are on the books or in plans but are not fully funded should be eligible. No restrictions on capitol or operation, but weighted towards projects that address both.

What about projects that are needed but not planned or studied? A member stated that jurisdictions and transit agencies should be encouraged to put forth projects that may be on a longer schedule, if it is a good project. Even if it is not funded in the first year, it will show the Legislature that there are bigger projects out there.

Regional Connections
A suggestion was made to add language to #8. "and/or develop hubs that serve multimodal services." After discussion, the Advisory Group decided that Multimodal should be a separate criterion. Now there are 10.

Potential Grant Application Questions
The Advisory Group began to review the questions.
After much consideration, a different order of questions was proposed.

1. Project Description
2. Description of the Current Conditions (CMS information)
3. Problem Statement
4. Benefits of the Project (include coordination/connection, measurement, consistency with local/regional plans)
5. Financial Plan
6. Other: Project Schedule and Readiness of the Project, Sustainability

The Technical Group will be asked to develop a matrix showing how the criteria will be measured using the responses from different questions.

Grant Workshops
Theresa announced that there will be two workshops to explain the grant program; the dates are September 20th and October 11th. The applications will be due on November 1st.

Other Issues

The Advisory Group decided:
- There will not be a limit on the number of applications that one jurisdiction can submit.
- There will not be a limit on the dollar amount requested on a single application.
    - There was some discussion that projects that requested $20 million might not be evaluated as favorably as projects that are requesting less than $20 million.

Wrap-up

The meeting concluded at 11:45 a.m.

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be August 19, at 9:30 a.m. in the same location.